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ABSTRACT

This brochure reflects information concerning the findings of staff members of the Elementary Schools Organization Section of the Office of Education in their visits to 16 cities (Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, New Haven, New York, Oakland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, San Diego, and Washington, D.C.), from programs with disadvantaged primary children. The brochure, it is held, will assist schools in interpreting the needs of such children and in programing constructively for them. The program emphases were on developing verbal ability, achieving understanding of self and others, broadening environmental understanding, increasing intellectual understanding, and cultivating emotional and cultural resources. As requirements for such programs, the brochure discusses the characteristics of teachers for the disadvantaged; parent-school relationships; supporting services such as school health specialist, home visitor, psychological services, early childhood education specialist, and parent-consultant; and facilities and equipment required. A select bibliography on the education of the disadvantaged child and a list of organizations having publications dealing with nursery-school kindergarten education are also provided in the brochure. (RJ)

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DISADVANTAGED
CHILDREN SERIES
No. 1

OE-35060

Educating Disadvantaged Children Under Six

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
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FOREWORD

A MAJOR PROBLEM FACING THE NATION is the need to help the increasing numbers of young people living in severely disadvantaged areas of our society realize their educational potential. Children from such neighborhoods characteristically find it difficult to meet school expectations which insure even a minimum level of personal-social competency. Many of them, discouraged almost before they begin, drop out of school as early as it is legally possible to do so and swell the numbers of unproductive citizens.

The weight of this problem falls heavily upon the large cities. School administrators in these cities, realizing its full scope and implication and aware too of the responsibility schools carry for developing academic and citizenship skills and attitudes, have been seeking ways to attack this problem effectively. Special programs underway in cities include working with children below the present age of school entrance and making an extra effort with children already enrolled in school. Findings and opinions emerging from such activities were the subject of study by staff members of the Elementary Schools Organization Section of the Office of Education in 16 of the cities known to be attempting to solve this problem. In addition, a conference called by the Office of Education engaged the consultant services of two outstanding researchers: Dr. Robert Hess, chairman of the Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, and Dr. Lassar Gotkin, senior research associate, New York Medical College; and two representative administrators, Miss Mary Adams, assistant superintendent of schools in charge

of elementary education in Baltimore City Schools, and Dr. Rebecca Winton, director of early childhood education in the New York City Public Schools.

Through a series of publications, the Elementary Schools Organization Section intends to make available techniques and practices presently found useful in working with educationally disadvantaged children 3 to 11 years old. The series, *Disadvantaged Children,* will be comprised of four brochures: *Educating Disadvantaged Children Under Six* (Nursery and Kindergarten), *Educating Disadvantaged Children in the Primary Years* (Grades K through 3), *Educating Disadvantaged Children in the Middle Grades* (Grades 4 through 6), and *Administration of Elementary School Programs for Disadvantaged Children.* This brochure, *Educating Disadvantaged Children Under Six,* reflects information concerning the findings from programs with disadvantaged preprimary children. It will assist schools in interpreting the needs of such children and in programing constructively for them.

The Office of Education acknowledges the cooperation of the school systems, teachers, and consultants who contributed so generously to this study.

FRED F. BEACH
Director, Elementary and Secondary
Organization and Administration Branch

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INTRODUCTION

SCHOOL SYSTEMS, particularly in the large cities, are diligently seeking ways to provide adequate education for the many disadvantaged pupils who have social and intellectual handicaps that lead to discouragement and failure.

Within the last decade, the number of such children has risen phenomenally. Problems posed are causing educators—and the public as well—to examine the nature of the educational needs of these children, and to reexamine school structure and processes to see what emphases or changes are needed to improve their effectiveness with this segment of the school population.

Severely disadvantaged children lack the environmental background provided by more fortunate families and communities from which language facility and other school foundations emanate. Characteristically, these children appear at the door of the school socially and psychologically unready for school. Teachers, who over the years have become familiar with ways of giving individual attention to a few such children each year, are overwhelmed at finding all or most of their pupils needing infinitely more help than they are able to give them.

Large cities are affected most by this problem. With the recent influx of rural families of low economic levels into urban areas, the number of children from disadvantaged neighborhoods in these cities approaches one-third of their total child population. (37) [1] This has resulted in changing almost overnight—frequently within less than a school year—

[1] Numbers in parentheses are keyed to the references in the bibliography.

the characteristics of the pupil population in schools of the "inner city," and has rendered almost useless the existent curriculum and methods of teaching which have proved effective with other children.

Educators acknowledge their responsibility to educate all our children. They have a proud record in this regard, and it is their wish to maintain it. Administrators realize that if these children are to achieve an adequate education and if they are to do so at an age level comparable with others, creative ways must be found to deal with them. Coping with the problem most certainly requires modification of the curriculum, methods of teaching, and school-parent relationships. It may require modification of school structure as well.

School systems working to help these disadvantaged children make up for losses incurred by cultural and economic deprivation are assisted by special funds from foundations and from local, State, and Federal sources.[2] In cooperating with foundations, the local school system often furnishes the space and most of the equipment and supplies, helps select the staff, and plans and supervises the programs. Voluntary organizations and institutions—such as churches, the Council of Jewish Women, the Junior League, the Young Men's Christian Association, and the Young Women's Christian Association -secondary schools and nearby colleges and universities, as well as interested individuals, lend a hand in providing aides for teachers and tutors for children.

In visits to 16[3] of the many cities attempting to cope with this problem, staff members of the Elementary Schools Organization Section of the Office of Education noted two major emphases: (1) Programs for children below school age, and (2) special efforts within the present school-age span. Findings regarding education below school age are reported in this brochure; those relating to school-age children will be reported in subsequent brochures.

[2]Ford Foundation funds were used in 11 of the 16 cities visited: Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New Haven, New York, Oakland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. California and New York have made available some State funds; Cleveland, Ohio, and Washington, D.C., have secured some Federal funds.

[3] Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, New Haven, New York, Oakland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Diego, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.

PREPRIMARY EDUCATION

Goals

SCHOOLS FOR DISADVANTAGED preprimary children are expressly aimed at providing experiences which will help each child develop his potentialities in order that he may become better able to understand and enjoy the world around him and to cope with situations he will meet upon entering the primary school. Since all aspects of growth—the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual—are reflected in educational achievement and in the development of potentialities, the school must necessarily give attention to every aspect, especially to those in which there is evident need or lack. Implied in this is a broad program of child observation and study to determine deprivations and needs, and of school and community services and cooperation to bring about correction.

Conditions

Certain conditions and assumptions are inherent in good educational programs for all children under six. (See all general references to curriculum in the bibliography.) The heart of good education is a good program and a teacher who can adapt it to meet the particular needs of the children in the class. The teacher must be able to perceive the needs of the group and individuals, and to utilize, adapt, or improvise to meet these needs. She must have professional competency; space, equipment, and materials

adequate to the operation of a good program; the understanding and support of the school staff and administration; and mental and physical health, supervisory, and consultant services when needed. The number of children assigned to her should make it possible to provide the face-to-face, adult-child relationship which young children require: a teacher-pupil ratio of one professionally qualified teacher and an assistant (who may be subprofessional) to not more than 20 children.

These conditions must be met or exceeded in situations designed to help young children make up for personal and cultural deprivations.

Program Emphases

In order to prescribe and administer a good program for disadvantaged children, the preprimary school or center must recognize both the strengths and deficiencies of these children.

The language deficiency becomes apparent immediately in the difficulty of reaching the child through words. (5, 6, 25, 33, 35, 37) Other lacks soon show up: in the way the child looks at himself, approaches others, and makes use of the environment; in his ignorance of the environment beyond a very limited geographic range, and of cultural items which in our society form customary infant and early childhood heritage. These gaps are reflected also in predominance of prelanguage ways of communicating, mainly through sounds and gestures; in withdrawing rather than participating behavior, and in inability to recognize and utilize things, events, and culture items commonly known to other young children, such as colors, shapes, objects, animals, nursery rhymes, and games.

Strengths are recognized in the underlying self-reliance and independence that many of these children show. Being left to their own devices for long periods of time, they have become accustomed to moving ahead in ways they have found to be satisfactory. It is a challenge to the school, in working with these children, to help them maintain their initiative and independence. The school must help each child to improve:

—his verbal ability

—his understanding of himself and others

—his perception and understanding of the environment

—his store of understandings to be applied to future situations

—his emotional and cultural resources through experiences which are satisfying: joy in music, art, poetry, stories, color, rhythm, materials, pictures, books, and friendships

Since language and conceptual development are critical factors in school success and are the areas in which these children show glaring lacks, priority in the program must be given to advancing the ability of individual children to express, communicate, and understand.

Developing Verbal Ability.—One of the most significant studies showing the language disparity among children of the various socioeconomic groups is that of Dr. Walter Loban, *The Language of Elementary School Children.* (25) In this study, which began at kindergarten and will extend through grade 12, of the language of 338 children from all socioeconomic levels, Dr. Loban found that:

> The subjects in the present study, at the kindergarten level, vary in vocabulary from 180 to about 5,000 words with 3,000 words as an average.
>
> • • •
>
> To whatever extent vocabulary is a factor in fluency, those with language ability manifest the greater variety and exactness of vocabulary.
>
> • • •
>
> The high group (most fluent children) also has a larger, more varied, and more readily accessible vocabulary.

Not only do some children enter kindergarten with very low verbal facility, but their rate of gain in school is slower than that of children entering with verbal facility. The study shows, for instance, that, in the first 4 years of school, children in the low (facility) group gained 35 percent. It also shows some of the handicaps placed on children who lack verbal power. While many children enter school with a wide vocabulary and the ability to select the needed words readily and order them into intelligible units

called sentences, other children operate on a very limited vocabulary and must struggle to choose the right words to express their meaning.

"The low group says less," Dr. Loban summarizes, "has more difficulty in saying it, and has less vocabulary with which to express what it says."

The language problem is also pointed out by researchers in a university who are assisting a large city in efforts to help disadvantaged children:

> Some children may be marked by a severe kind of verbal destitution beyond anything that we have ordinarily identified as unreadiness. Some may have full language development of a kind but not the kind most valued by the school. Still others may lack conceptualization of experience in some of the areas we expect school beginners to know about, and may thus appear to be suffering from language underdevelopment. (33)

The way in which this contrasts with the language development of better advantaged children is indicated in a report of a study in which children from the middle and upper socioeconomic groups, ages 3 to 8, proved higher in 217 of 230 possible comparisons, notably in articulation, grammatical complexity, vocabulary, and length of sentence. (8)

Limitations in experience bring about deficiencies in language. Children cannot verbalize where there is no conceptual understanding and no vocabulary to "frame" the experience. Many young children in the lower class have not developed a vocabulary of the names of even the commonest objects, such as tables, chairs, coats—or the words which join, such as *and*, *but*, and *because*. They are unable to make a transition from the object, to recognition of a picture of the object, to recall of the absent object, to recognition of a symbol which stands for the object: a word, oral or written, a mathematical symbol, a code of any kind. Without these, verbal communication is carried out through single or disconnected words or, at best, short phrases.

In recognizing this, schools visited are building vocabulary through identification of much-used objects. Every opportunity is used to encourage pupils to learn words and to remember them. Objects, classmates, and teachers are named, labelled, talked about, sung about. Children are required to name the

objects they want, and gradually to observe such common courtesies as *please, thank you, excuse me.* Trips are taken; objects, then pictures of objects are used; and games are devised to reinforce learning. Stories and nursery rhymes are read and used for vocabulary development, as "Who was sitting *beside* Miss Muffet?" "Who is *beside* you?"

The teacher introduces and uses verbs and adverbs: "The dog ran." "It ran fast." "The dog barked—sniffed at—." "We climb up."

Relating words to make sentences, an ability acquired informally in earliest childhood in middle-class homes, is a difficult task for the underdeveloped 4-year-old, especially since he has cultivated a living style which does not depend on words or sentences. In the beginning, the teacher's action, or a child's, is accompanied by a short sentence, as "I will sit here." "I will sit on the chair." "Put the book on the table." The related words, however, will not serve the child as elements for further thinking until they are understood without action, in the abstract. (25, 38) As children advance, language experiences which engage the group—such as listening to and talking about stories, or planning together—motivate the need for speech. Taped material increases listening power; group play creates a need to talk; and the two-way telephone inspires effort to clarify ideas and convey a message.

There is more to language development, however, than knowing words, building sentences, or having wide experience. In school, children must experience pleasure in talking. The language they bring when they enter school, no matter what it is, must be fully accepted, without show of surprise or disapproval. Desire to express must be encouraged.

Content material that is new, however, should be presented with meaning and careful correctness as to pronunciation and cadence, and repeated as often as necessary to insure learning. The teacher's task is to devise experiences to awaken awareness; to introduce meaningful vocabulary and motivate attention to words, phrases, and sentences; and to plan for needed repetition in a variety of ways for child-like purposes until a degree of fluency results. She must produce the warm, uncritical free-flowing hu-

man relationships in which human beings come to know and understand each other.

That children do gain in a friendly, stimulating atmosphere is borne out by a consultant at the end of the first year of working with teachers of disadvantaged preprimary children:

> Despite the lack of statistical evidence, teachers already have seen evidences of gain in the children at the end of the first year's program. They observed that the children were using short descriptive sentences instead of their former one-word requests. Descriptions of home happenings and verbalizations of needs were more often noted, too. The children were reported to be able to listen and respond to verbal direction, with greatly increased attention spans. (9)

The most important gain of the first year, according to this writer, was in interest and enthusiasm for school-oriented activities by both the children and their parents.

Achieving Understanding of Self and Others.—Before children can be expected to enter into and gain from the life of the school, they must "feel right" about being there. These young children, because of their severely limited social and intellectual experience, are more threatened than most by new ventures into the unknown, even by unaccustomed efforts at reassurance. They have many fears to be allayed. To them, school may appear a formidable place.

In the beginning days of school, then, much of the effort of the teacher is expended toward making the children "feel safe" in the school, helping each feel that school is a good place to be and that he is important in the school. As a result, the child comes eventually to feel that here he can try things out without fear and can learn through exciting experiences, with a teacher-friend to help when he needs it.

Prior to school opening, the teacher has visited all homes, is acquainted with each child and his family, and has records of the child's health history and general behavior. The first day—and every day—the teacher welcomes each one as he enters the schoolroom, making it a point to look directly at him, speak his name, and make some personalized observation which will assure him that it is HE who is being made welcome, that he is in no danger, that he

need not evade. Such identification, teachers say, is entirely necessary among deprived children—to help each identify himself as an individual, to ease the sense of strangeness, to relate the teacher's presence to himself, and to open the way for involvement with materials, equipment, and other children.

Throughout every schoolday, the teacher takes advantage of every opportunity to speak to the child, use his name, and look directly at him as she conveys a message, waiting sometimes for a response from him. She guides him gently when he is reluctant to move in on a new experience; she plays with him or helps him play, matching him with other children who might prove companionable, helping him learn their names, and giving him encouragement to try himself in various directions. In short, she gives him warmth, reassurance, and faith in himself and his environment. As the days go by, he changes slowly from alienation to dependence upon the teacher for reassurance, to stages of independence in which he alternately "tries his wings" and reverts to dependence, ultimately venturing again to a higher level of independence.

To assist in this evolution, the teacher uses techniques of teaching designed to make the pupil comfortable and to help him understand himself. Games help him recognize the common body parts: hands, feet, fingers, toes, arms, legs, eyes, ears, nose, hair, face, mouth, tongue. He learns about "my eyes," "your eyes," "Mary's eyes." For the first time, perhaps, he has a place for "my things," with a distinctive picture-label: a butterfly, a bird, a ball, or a dog. For a day or two he, who may have had no previous possession, may proudly claim "my chair," "my ball." On the other hand, he may have brought some object from home to give him security. He listens to the teacher as she calls him by name, as she talks to him, reads to him, sings to him, or plays with him. The teacher's skill is always to make him feel it is for *him*, even when he is in a group.

To aid in self-identification, a full-length mirror is provided, too, where he sees himself walking, sitting, playing; and he also sees his friends there. Later in the year, he may see himself in a picture the teacher has taken and has put on the door of his locker or,

along with other children's pictures, on the wall or into a book which he examines with pride.

He goes on walks with his teacher and some children—and perhaps a parent or two—to observe and gain concepts about the environment: to see adults working, to see the fire station, or to see and name a tree. He returns and is shown pictures of men and women of various cultures working at familiar occupations: building, painting, policing. He hears a few basic words related to the activity: man, woman, cuts, paints, tree, leaves, policeman, and the like. With the teacher's help, if necessary, he dramatizes or symbolizes in rhythms or in block play. The teacher may be rewarded by hearing him say a word or two.

The walk is repeated soon again, as are the pictures and the natural followup activities. Thus he gains familiarity with commonplace events, and he stores a part of these events in an ever-enlarging depository of meaningful images or ideas (concepts, perceptions) which he may use at another time.

Broadening Environmental Understanding.—The environment to which these children are accustomed is typically crowded, noisy, and unorganized. They, however, have learned how to live in it and most of them have developed the necessary perceptions, aggresions, evasions, escapes, and tolerances to deal with it. The school experience calls for new reactions. It calls for listening to and obeying instead of ignoring or resisting the adult present; for a degree of orderliness in handling clothing, equipment, and routines; for using materials with a sense of responsibility for the surroundings and for conservation; for using freedoms in such ways as not to infringe too greatly upon the freedoms of others; for sharing and cooperating instead of coveting and resisting; for using trusting instead of furtive behavior. This situation, contrasting so greatly with anything they have known, can easily overwhelm them, causing confusion and frustration.

In the beginning days, the schoolroom environment is designed to be inviting but is simple, offering no confusion. It is orderly but its orderliness does not hamper movement and use. At first it contains a few small chairs or a long beam for sitting, rugs for sitting or lying, a balance board, a table with a

picture book or two, several sets of identical toys, a cart to pull or push, a doll or two, a few chairs for adults, and, above all, a teacher who offers friendship promptly and leads the child, with several others, into an engaging activity, such as ball rolling or listening to a plainly sung lullaby on a tape or record player. Eventually all the facilities of a good nursery school or kindergarten will be there, but the articles will be added gradually as the teacher perceives that children are ready for them. To help children learn more quickly, some of the new materials will be carefully and deliberately introduced, explained, and explored.

In one classroom observed, children were at rest, lying or sitting on individual mats on the floor. The teachers were also sitting on the floor, one humming to a small boy who momentarily needed to be more relaxed and reassured. On the periphery were book shelves and a listening corner equipped with a tape recorder with several earphones, a record player, a table with a book or two, and several small chairs; an animal area with farm and zoo animals in pens and cages, and some people figures; a home corner with multicultural dolls, beds, kitchen with dishes, sink, refrigerator, stove, cleaning equipment, and dress-up clothes; a piano; and a block area with shelves filled with blocks well spaced for children's handling. Nearby were a cart, train, and truck; adjoining these, a work-bench with saws, hammers, wood, and a box of sawdust; and a box of multicolored balls. A balance board marked off a large area which held climbing apparatus and a mat for jumping. Tables held puzzles, games, and an alphabet board. Near the door was a low drinking fountain, and well within the door were some adult chairs, including a rocker. Available also were easels and paints for art work. Adjoining rooms provided toilets (a toilet and basin for each eight children), offices, an isolation room for sick or disturbed children, and a consultation room.

Additional items—other toys, musical instruments, books, models of animals and of workers familiar to the pupils, and plastic fruit and vegetables—were on reserve for those days when "new things" are necessary to capture the interest of a particular child who needs fresh stimulation.

Outdoor equipment is brought into use gradually, too. At best, it may include trees with low-hanging, sturdy branches for swinging and climbing; a slide; a sand box; a tub for water play; easy accessibility to wheels and wheel toys, such as wagons, trains, and carts; blocks or log pieces; a workbench with vise, saw, and hammer; garden tools; ropes; and balls for throwing. Kegs, hollow cylindrical tiles, boards, packing boxes, saw horses, and walking boards provide adaptable materials for jumping, building, and the like.

Very slowly and without strain, with repetition and dramatic play, each child is helped to "get things out," "use things here," "put them away here," thus engaging in and learning a sense of orderliness which helps him and the group to function. Gradually, he also learns to trust others, to accept and give help in work and play. He learns that it is a pleasure to be a member of a group when taking a walk, playing a circle game, listening to a story, or eating a snack.

The environment within the nursery school or kindergarten has many possibilities for extending the learnings of children. The schoolroom or center itself is a complex of new experiences. Here the child meets a strange building, new children, new adults, new things, new situations. He experiences the friendliness of the teacher, the overcoming of fear, the opportunity to use things freely but under supervision, the need for order. Under wise guidance, his storehouse of learning expands. He revises old concepts and develops new ones. He finds a need to communicate about himself, others, and his expanding world, and to clarify his growing perceptions.

Possible sources of experience within the center include:

Playing with blocks, home equipment, toys, wheeled vehicles, water, sawdust, clay, and table games and puzzles

Walking, running, jumping, dramatizing

Observing, caressing, helping to care for animals, such as a rabbit or guinea pig; helping to care for plants

Looking at pictures, books, films, and slides

Listening to the teacher, to tapes, to records, to other children

Talking to others

Making choices

Responding creatively to music

Listening to nursery rhymes, stories, poetry, books

Saying simple verses together

Resting, napping, eating, toileting, grooming

Drawing, painting, dancing

Recognizing colors, numbers, alphabet letters

Welcoming and enjoying visitors

Possible sources of interest in the near neighborhood include:

Flowers, vegetables, trees, rain, sun, snow

Sky, soil, mud, grass, bricks, stones, sand

Houses: my house, your house, the little yellow house

Stores: all kinds

Trains, trucks, buses, people walking, animals walking, children walking

Workers of all sorts: men, women, children

Machines at work

Buildings of all sizes, colors, materials; some finished, some going up, some coming down

Street, river, hill, playground, dump

Animals: pets, nobody's pets

Insects

Bridges

Families, friends, and others

Just "things"

An occasional trip to the far neighborhood, city, or country may extend the concepts of children. The following trips are accessible by bus, car, or train in almost any area:

Just to ride; to look outside

To see animals—in the zoo or the circus

ERIC 18

To see plants—in the park or in gardens

To have fun—in a park, on a picnic, on a playground

To visit a farm—to see animals, milk, trees, farmers

To have a good look at the city—from an overview point

To visit the airport, library or fire station

Increasing Intellectual Understanding.—Educators working in present programs emphasize the teacher's responsibility not only to provide a nurturing environment, but also to select experiences, stimulate interest, and guide learning along lines of general deficiencies which seem vital to early school success—that is, to structure a desirable but flexible curriculum.

How experiences may be planned to help children develop power to adapt to a necessary minimum of order, to identify objects, to broaden concepts, and to express ideas and feelings has been suggested. One teacher explained how materials can be placed on shelves and in cupboards in such ways as to require children to use discriminating ability in selecting and returning those they wish to use:

> The equipment was often grouped by particular physical characteristics. For example, the blocks were arranged on low shelves according to size and shape relationships, necessitating that their use and return to the shelves be a discrimination task.
>
> Use of other equipment often required discrimination of size, shape, color, or number. . . .(9)

Concept formation is emphasized continuously. A color, for instance, is noted in clothing, in pictures, in objects. Children are asked to match objects to the color *red*; to say *red*; to identify *red* in various places, to fetch a *red* ribbon, book, or other object. When other colors are introduced, discrimination is made among them.

Concepts of size, shape, and use are called to attention through many exercises in discrimination. Objects such as blocks, cookies, animals, trees, and the like are compared; and descriptive words such as *big, little, bigger,* and *smaller* are encouraged and practiced. Attention is called to differences and simi-

larities, such as: "That one is tall; this one is short." "This puzzle piece fits; that one does not." "This has ears; that one does not have ears." "This one only has skin." "That car is black; this one is green." "This hand is dirty; this one is clean." "Both my hands are clean." "My doll is asleep; yours is awake."

Water play engages a group. The teacher listens. She hears Marie say, "Water is nice to play in." George adds, "It's good for boats, too." Ann says, "It makes my dress all wet." Bob says, "I like it. I swim in it." Here is fertile ground for advancing concepts—scientific, social, or recreational—depending on the needs of an individual or the group.

Cultivating Emotional and Cultural Resources.—No program for children is a good one without the experiences which extend and deepen the emotional and cultural resources of each individual. No matter how important the purpose of the school, it must be achieved through satisfying, even joyous experiences which enrich the learner.

Daily experience should be replete with opportunities to move about, to explore on one's own, to create, make believe, build, and try out. All senses should be engaged in these efforts: seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, feeling. All ways of expressing should be encouraged: graphic arts, as on newsprint with crayons or paints; plastic arts, as with clay; musical activity, as in rhythms, dancing, and singing; enjoying the literary heritage of nursery rhymes, jingles, and stories; and contributing stories in jingles by learning to enjoy playing with sounds, as in rhyming end sounds, matching beginning sounds, and other sound-play activities natural and interesting to children. Efforts to experience and create in these ways, if rewarded by the approval and encouragement of the teacher, will cause the child to "spread his wings," to soar high, and to realize the best that is in him.

The Teacher

The teacher of any group of 4- and 5-year-olds must be a person of warmth, wisdom, emotional maturity, and integrity. In disadvantaged centers, however, she will need more than ordinary amounts of

these personal qualities, for she will be called upon to respond warmly to children whom some in her circle may not consider worthy and whose behavior may differ greatly from that of the children she knows well. To deal with the unexpected and unpleasant in children in such ways as to benefit them tests the wisdom and emotional maturity of the adult. She must not depend on disguising indifference or disapproval, for these children have developed perception of adult behavior. When one teacher tried to cloak her disapproving attitude, an insightful and facile 4-year-old confided to a visitor, "She do not like us. When she touch us, she shiver inside."

The teacher must not only feel affection, but must show it with all children. She must give intensive individual attention to those who need it, yet without alienating others. She must guide all of them. In the day-to-day relationships, she must know how to acknowledge accomplishments—as in jumping, running, dancing, building—and to encourage where needed, as, "John, you can do it. Try it."

She must understand biological and emotional characteristics and needs of all young children, must be observant and understand characteristics of the disadvantaged, and must identify particularly the differences that exist between these children and others. She must have faith that children can overcome these differences. Her success as a teacher depends on her ability to carry out a program which helps pupils acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and abilities needed to help them function more alertly in the present environment, and to prepare them also for the steps ahead.

In addition, the teacher must understand how to work with parents to secure for children the reinforcement and support of the home. She must be able to inspire and maintain the confidence and cooperation of parents as she slowly but surely takes steps to help them help their children.

In all these programs, although "good" teachers of young children are selected, it is essential to orient them, before school opens, to the characteristics of a deprived neighborhood and its effects upon children who live there; to the needs of these particular children as persons and as learners; and to the elements of a successful program. It is helpful to teachers

also to meet frequently in a seminar or in a sharing experience during the school year; for much of what is tried is novel, and encouragement in trying and in evaluating must be continuous.

Parent-School Relationships

Wherever teachers were asked to name the priority items in a program for disadvantaged children, almost unanimously they named acceptance of each child as he is as the major requisite, and parent-school cooperation as a close second. (11) So important is it to deal with parents that most of the present experiments accept children on condition that their parents spend several hours or a half-day weekly at the school. Those who accompany their children are made welcome and helped to understand the values of the school. Younger children are cared for while the mother confers with a teacher or social worker, or moves about to see what is going on.

School for young children is generally 2 to 2½ hours a day, four days a week[1]—a teacher working with a group of 7 or 8 in each half-day. The fifth day is set aside for individual and group conferences or workshops with parents, for planning, and for in-service education.

Securing the cooperation of parents sometimes tests a teacher's skill. Among these parents are some who themselves did not do well in school and dropped out; many now fear or resent the school. Like their children, some have lived restricted lives within a few city blocks or a "compound." Others work long hours outside the home and have little energy left for the school interests of their families. They venture out timidly and at great effort, but are basically appreciative of opportunities to talk among themselves and with the teacher about their children. Informality is encouraged, with food to facilitate conversation. Parents sometimes take pride in preparing and contributing food.

Beginning with the preparation of food, topics may move gradually to others: for example, the school organization and program; children in gen-

[1] It is considered desirable to make the new extensions all-day schools, with a full meal included.

eral, and their own children in particular; behavior or health problems of children (sometimes spilling over into family problems); and ways parents can help their children. These parents, like others, want their children to come to school and succeed. Many want the school to discipline their children.

Suggestions must be practical and clarified by example or demonstration. Useful suggestions include how and what stories to read to children, what trips to take, and how to encourage older brother or sisters to help the young. Occasionally individuals request instruction for their own development, learning to read and write, for instance.

Through working to develop the "art" of conversation, the center encourages parents to talk with their families in sentences, requiring sentences in return; to make use of nursery rhymes and stories; to show interest in what the children do in and out of school; to show interest also in books, the newspaper, the library; and to take their families to interesting places. Frequently the complexity of the outside world mystifies them, and help must be given in *how* they can take advantage of outside sources: how to use the bus, enter a library, or visit the zoo.

Teachers attempt to interest parents by encouraging children to take picture books home. Sometimes an older child reads to them from it. When this happens, parents usually show great pride and urge children to continue their interest in school and in books.

Parents sometimes like to assist the school on trips by contributing something for a social event, by helping to "straighten up," and by assisting in the daily struggle with winter wraps. Frequently they bring neighboring children to school and take them home.

Supporting Services

The supporting services of the following special personnel are required in the primary school:

1. *A school health specialist* to assemble medical histories, arrange for medical examinations prior to school entrance, conduct careful followup of children

with remediable defects or deficiencies, conduct daily observation in the classroom, refer to proper authorities cases needing attention, and advise the teacher on health-related aspects of the environment and program.

2. A *home visitor* to relate the school and the home, to hold or facilitate individual and group conferences with parents, to help parents secure needed services for their children, and to help plan programs and opportunities for the education of parents. (27)

3. *Psychological services* to include testing of children who present serious deviations in behavior and learning.

4. *A specialist in early childhood education* to advise on curriculum aspects of the program related to child growth and development and readiness for school in the first grade.

5. A *parent-consultant* to advise on aspects of the parent program, and to coordinate the resources available in the community and in colleges and universities.

Facilities and Equipment

Space should be safe, sanitary, and adequate to support a good program. Indoor classroom space should allow 35 to 40 square feet per child, exclusive of a toilet room (which should adjoin and be equipped with a toilet and a lavatory for each 8 children), an isolation room for children who are ill or in need of special attention, storage space, and quarters for administrative offices and parent-school activities.

Outdoor space should allow 75 to 100 square feet per child, and be free from hazards to safety. It should provide "sun and shade, good drainage, a place to dig, grass, and hard-surfaced area for wheel toys. . . storage shelter, and an outlet for running water. . . All equipment should be sturdy, washable, attractive, and usable in many ways by children of various ages." (30)

The classroom should be equipped with a low drinking fountain, movable tables and chairs, screens and portable bookcases to be used as dividers, and such other materials as are generally necessary to a

good nursery school or kindergarten. Standard publications dealing with nursery and kindergarten education carry complete listings of desirable equipment. (3, 16, 18, 24, 30, 41)

The following is quoted from *Educating Children in Nursery Schools and Kindergartens:* (16)

> *Suggested Equipment and Materials.*—The equipment and materials listed below are suggested for nursery schools and kindergartens according to the type of activity of experience:
>
> Active work and play
>
> - Ladders, slides, jungle gym, and saw horses
> - Crawling-through apparatus
> - Packing boxes, large blocks, smooth boards, and kegs
> - Wagons large enough to hold a child, tricycles of proper size, and wheel toys
> - Large and small balls and bean bags
> - Mallet with peg set for younger children and work bench of correct height with soft wood and tools of good quality for older children
> - Swings with canvas bucket seats
> - Gardening tools
> - Storage unit for outdoor play equipment
>
> Quiet work and play
>
> - Books and pictures for young children (anthologies for the teacher)
> - Projection equipment, slides, and films
> - Simple globes and maps for older children
> - Viewmaster with slides
> - Puzzles and matching picture games
> - Crayons, paper, blunt scissors, and paste
> - Mats, cushions, and rocking chair
> - Water play toys
> - Large wooden beads for young children, smaller ones for older ones
> - Aquarium

Art and music materials

- Easels, paints, crayons, chalk, clay, sand, and paste
- Brushes, scraps of materials, sponges, large paper, and pictures
- Hammers, saws, nails, screws, and soft wood
- Record player and records
- Simple instruments: bells, sticks, drums, triangles, cymbals, and tone blocks
- Tape recorder

Creative play—quiet or active

- Playhouse with furnishings and equipment, including those for cooking and laundering
- Floor blocks with accessory toys, such as family figures and farm and zoo animals
- Transportation toys: trucks, trains, airplanes, and boats
- Ride-a-stick horse
- Toy luggage and toy telephone
- Dress-up clothes
- Hats for astronauts, firemen, postmen, and others
- Sandbox and sand toys
- Toys for water play
- Hand puppets
- Soft wood, hammers, saws, nails, and paint

CONCLUSION

THERE IS GROWING CONVICTION that schools can help children from the lower socioeconomic areas make up for many of their out-of-school deprivations. Educators are being challenged to demonstrate their professional skill by bringing these children into the school 2 years before first grade and providing them—under the guidance of a warm, capable, professionally equipped teacher—with personal and group experiences of a broadening nature in surroundings which, for a few hours each day, assure them of happiness and of growth in needed areas. These experiences may well be justified in terms of personal well-being of a large segment of our people; they should also open the way for future success and self-realization. Administrators and teachers applying their services to educate these young children may take pride in assisting the Nation to correct a gravely threatening situation.

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Association for Childhood Education International
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW.
Washington, D.C. 20016

Department of Elementary-Kindergarten-Nursery Education
National Education Association
1201 16th Street, NW.
Washington, D.C. 20036

National Association for the Education of Young Children
3700 Massachusetts Ave. NW.
Washington, D.C. 20016

Many excellent articles dealing with this topic are also to be found in current professional and popular magazines.

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